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of the relationship between the Oriental and European myths rather lends color, in this single instance, to the theory of Benfey that the Western stories were derived, in the middle age, from the Eastern, and have subsequently developed into the multitude of varieties now known to exist in almost every civilized country. A similar remark may be made concerning the last of the Russian tales contained in this volume before us, "Vassilissa, the Cunning," which is curiously identical with *Cath nan Eun*, or, The Battle of the Birds, No. 2 of the Gaelic collection of Campbell. The writer is in possession of an unpublished English folk-tale belonging to the same series. This want of local originality in material is one reason why collectors in some instances have felt called upon to polish up the stories obtained by them and provide these with a suitable literary dress, as has been done in some of the Magyar tales. However, in spite of this general similarity, folk-tales are not useless to mythology. The Russian in particular have a character of freshness and preserve old mythologic conceptions, which have been added to the original element by the people adopting the tales. Does this character, however, imply greater primitiveness, as, for example, when in the tale first noted the hero, who in most European versions of the story is represented to be simply a giant or magician, is called Whirlwind, as Mr. Curtin translates the name? We can only say that to us this greater antiquity appears doubtful, and that we are much disposed to believe that the Russians, in this case, in spite of their objections to European civilization, had paid that civilization the unconscious compliment of borrowing from their southern neighbors. Indeed, even traits from literary French tales of the eighteenth century have found their way into Russian stories.

We are quite ready to admit, however, that there is in the coloring and treatment of these tales by Russians much that is interesting in a mythological point of view, and we cannot too strongly commend the activity and enthusiasm of the translator in pursuing his favorite study.

W. W. NEWELL.

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*De la langue et de l'écriture indigènes au Yün-nân, par M. Paul Vial, Missionnaire Apostolique du Yün-nân. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890.*

This contribution to our very meagre knowledge of the language, and especially the undeciphered script of the Lolas of Western China, is, we hope, only the first we may expect from the pen of the

first European who has made himself conversant with the language and curious literature of these aboriginal tribes. M. Vial has been for over three years a missionary among the Ngi-pa Lolos of southern Yunnan, and he has collected in the 23 8vo pages of this pamphlet the most interesting data relating to the language of the people among whom he has been living.

The too short vocabulary given in this study shows in their language the presence of a large percentage (but not more than we expected) of foreign words, both Chinese and Tibetan. In the first class I note *lou*, dragon; in Chinese, *lung*; *shè*, serpent; Chinese, *shè*; *to*, rabbit; Chinese, *tú*, etc. In the second class are *tsa*, salt; Tibetan, *ts'a*; *dza*, eat; Tibetan, *za*; *tche*, dog; Tibetan, *chi* (written *k'yī*); *sa*, understand; Tibetan, *shé* (*shes*), etc., etc.

But the most interesting portion of Père Vial's study relates to the script of the Lolos, of which the first specimen was secured some twelve years ago by E. Colborne Baber. Professor Terrien de Lacouperie endeavored to establish a connection between these curious characters and the old Indian script known as the southern Ashoka alphabet. The present work gives them a much less glorious origin. Père Vial says of them (p. 15): "The native characters were formed without key, without method. It is impossible to decompose them. They are written, not with the strokes of a brush, but with straight, curved, round, or angular lines, as the shape chosen for them requires.

"As the representation could not be perfect, they have stopped at something which can strike the eye or mind—form, motion, passion, a head, a bird's beak, a mouth, right or left, lightness or heaviness; in short, at that portion of the object delineated which is peculiarly characteristic of it; but all characters are not of this expressive kind; some even have no connection with the idea they express. This anomaly has its reason. The native characters are much less numerous than the words of the language, only about thirty per cent. Instead of increasing the number of ideograms, the Lolos have used one for several words. As a result of this practice, the natives have forgotten the original meaning of many of their characters." Another natural result of this practice has been that syllabic writing has progressed rapidly among them.

The characters are written like nearly all those used in Indo-China—*i. e.*, from left to right; but, like Chinese, they are written in vertical columns.

According to native traditions, the Black Lolos wrote anciently on hardened dough; the White, or Reclaimed Lolos on linen. At present paper is solely used.

Père Vial finishes his interesting study by giving the text and translation of the native legend of the deluge, one of the most celebrated of their myths, and which is recited at betrothals, marriages, and deaths.

Nearly all Lolo books are prayers or on the subject of divination. Their prayers are series of descriptions or narratives, and Père Vial adds that he has seen none in which the deity is personally and directly invoked.

There are also "family books" or genealogies, in which all purchases, sales, or divisions of family property are recorded and, possibly, some details concerning the tribes; but the author had, at the date of writing, been unable to examine any works of this class.

W. W. ROCKHILL.

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"*The Golden Bough, a Study in Comparative Religion.* By J. G. Frazer, M. A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. London and New York: Macmillan & Company, 1890.

Professor Frazer is by no means a stranger to the American reading public. Two years ago he published his monograph on "Totemism," which met with a most cordial and well-deserved reception on both sides of the Atlantic. The abundance of citations and references supplied proved him to be an erudite scholar, conscientiously desirous of making clear to his readers every argument or hypothesis advanced in his text.

There is no carelessness in his method. The smallest item is worked and polished with as much attention as the more prominent sections of his thesis.

"The Golden Bough" shows the same skillful massing of facts and an equally brilliant appreciation of their correlation and interdependence, and an equally graceful manner of delineation. This work might be defined as an explanation of anthropological questions from the standpoint of folk-lore and folk-usage; or, rather, a demonstration of the fact that there is scarcely any fragment of folk-knowledge that cannot be made to discharge a most important function in anthropological study.